

IX.—*Notes on the Birds of Novaja Zemlia and Waigats Island.*

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ALLOW me to offer to the readers of 'The Ibis' a short account of the ornithological results of my voyage to Novaja Zemlia. Our steamer left Hammerfest on the 25th of July, 1871, and passed Nordkyn the next day, whence we made directly for the Matotschkin Shar (Matthew's Strait), where the 'Germania' anchored on the 6th of August. Our stay was prolonged to the 20th, as icebergs, blocking up the entrance of the Sea of Kara, obliged us to go back. We lay in Kostin Shar the 23rd and 24th of August, and availed ourselves of the opportunity to visit the lower part of the Nechwatowa river. We then proceeded to Waigats Island, whence, between the 1st and 7th of September, we made vain attempts to penetrate the Straits of Yugorsky and Kara; for both were blocked with drift-ice. The advanced state of the season determined the Captain to return, as he thought it impossible this year to reach the Obi, Yenisei, or Taimyr. Any further exploration of Novaja Zemlia also remained unaccomplished; so that I had only an opportunity of paying a rapid visit to the above-mentioned places of the double island, the west coast of Waigats, and the mouth of the Nikolskaja river, on the continent, near Yugorsky Strait.

Notwithstanding the very limited time I had to bestow upon ornithological observations and notes, the results do not seem to be so inconsiderable, as shown by the following list of the birds of Novaja Zemlia and Waigats.

Reference is made at the end of Mr. Gillett's paper in 'The Ibis' for 1870 (p. 309) to the ornithological notes on that group of islands, published by the Academician Von Baer. In the present account are included Pachtussow's reports ('Sapiski des hydrographischen Departements des Ministeriums,' i. pp. 216-220, *cf.* Spörer, *Novaja Semlä*, p. 100), containing some notices of birds, but mentioned under Russian and Samoyed names. Mr. Gillett gives twenty-eight species as observed here. The species not observed by myself I here mark with † before the number.

1. *FALCO GYRFALCO*.—*Falco buteo*, Spörer, N. Semlä, p. 98? *F. gyrfalco* (et *peregrinus*?).—Gillett, no. 1 (et 2?).

We observed, both in Matthew's Strait and also in Kostin Shar, two large Falcons which are certainly to be referred to the above-named species.

2. *SURNIA NYCTEA*.—Gillett, no. 3.

Not common in Matthew's or Waigats Strait. I found three nests with two young birds covered with down in Seal's Bay, near the mouth of Matthew's Strait, in the Sea of Kara. The nests consisted of a shallow depression in the turf, without any lining. The food of the Snowy Owl, at least during the summer time, consists exclusively of species of *Myodes*, which are very numerous. The down of the young is plain brownish-grey. They are easy to tame, and their comical gestures and vivacity are amusing.

†3. *HIRUNDO RUSTICA*.—Gillett, no. 5: Heugl. Geogr. Mittheil. 1871, p. 66.

Seen by Mr. Gillett and Capt. Ulve on the north-west coast of the North Island.

4. *ANTHUS CERVINUS*.—Von Middend. Sib. Reise, ii. 2. p. 165, t. xiv.

Not uncommon at Waigats, and on the Nikolskaja. In pairs on swampy meadow-lands. The moult of the adult takes place in the beginning of September. Throat and superciliary streak are of a bright rust-colour, the rest of the lower parts tawny (*leonino-fulva*).

5. *OTOCORYS ALPESTRIS*.

In pairs in Matthew's Strait, and Kostin Shar, on Waigats and the Nikolskaja. By the 8th of August the young were already fledged. The moult of the adult takes place at the end of that month. They are in habits very much like *Anthus pratensis*, and show themselves also sometimes in the rushes and high grass.

6. *PLECTROPHANES NIVALIS*.—Gillett, no. 4.

Everywhere abundant. We found newly fledged young at the beginning of August, at which time there were still birds

unable to fly. The autumnal moult of the old ones takes place at the end of August. The southward migration begins in the middle of September; and then the Snow-Buntings are generally in closely packed flocks.

†7. *LAGOPUS*, sp. ?—Spörer, N. Semlä, p. 98.

According to Pachtussow there are Ptarmigans on the Double Island. I believe I found in Matthew's Strait the remains of a species of *Lagopus*; and a Norwegian of our company, who knew these birds well, asserted that he had seen a "Ripa" in Dolphin Bay. It would, indeed, be remarkable if this genus were not here represented, although there are an extraordinary number of Arctic Foxes, which in the winter must be very destructive to these animals.

8. *CHARADRIUS APRICARIUS*.—Von Middend. *l. c.* p. 210.

Very common on the continent near Yugorsky Strait; more rare on Waigats.

9. *EUDROMIAS MORINELLUS*.—Gillett, no. 6.

Observed by Mr. Gillett in Matthew's Strait. We found small flocks near Yugorsky Strait. At the beginning of September the young had still some down on the back of their head; the adults change even the small feathers.

10. *ÆGIALITIS HIATICULA*.—Gillett, no. 7.

Everywhere common; they must breed late, as we found nestlings in the middle of August.

†11. *STREPSILAS COLLARIS*.—Spörer, N. Semlä, p. 98.

Occurs, according to Von Baer, on Novaja Semlia—information which gains probability, as Von Middendorff met with the Turnstone, on the Taimyr, as far as lat. 74° N.

12. *TRINGA MARITIMA*.—Gillett, no. 8.

Everywhere common, and generally in pairs. In autumn in smaller or larger flocks, and often mixed with *T. cinclus* and *T. minuta*. On the 8th of August I found nestlings still very small, and covered with down.

13. *TRINGA CINCLUS*.

Very common in September on Waigats.

14. *TRINGA MINUTA*.

Breeds in Matthew's Strait in swampy meadows. Very common in September on Waigats. Many old birds in summer-plumage show a rusty hair-like elongation of the tibial plumage.

15. *CALIDRIS ARENARIA*.

Some in September on Waigats, among flocks of *Tringa cinclus*.

16. *PHALAROPUS CINEREUS*.

Already in autumn plumage, in the beginning of September, in parties of about six or more, on shallow freshwater pools on Waigats Island.

17. *CYGNUS BEWICKI*.

At the end of August we obtained an old bird, undoubtedly belonging to this species, on the Nechwatowa (Kostin Shar).

†18. *CYGNUS MUSICUS*.—Spörer, N. Semlä, p. 98.

Occurs, according to Von Baer, in Novaja Semlia. Two Swans, which may have belonged to this species, flew over our ship on the 11th of September, in a south-westerly direction, coming from Novaja Semlia.

19. *ANSER SEGETUM*.—Gillett, no. 24.

Very common; migrates about the middle of September.

20. *BERNICLA BRENTA*.—Gillett, no. 23.

Like the preceding species, in great flocks.

21. *SOMATERIA MOLLISSIMA*.—Gillett, no. 27.

Everywhere on rocky islands, but not so common as in Spitsbergen. On the 8th of August, we still found breeding females; we saw no old males.

22. *SOMATERIA SPECTABILIS*.—Gillett, no. 28.

Rarer than the preceding species, and seems to breed earlier in the year.

23. *HARELDA GLACIALIS*.—Gillett, no. 26.

Everywhere very common, and especially in shallow places under cliffs, on the sea, on freshwater pools, and at the mouths of rivers. Their stomachs contained chiefly univalve shells (*Natica*).

24. *ÆDESMIA FUSCA*.

Paired and in flocks in Kostin Shar, and on Waigats, round cliffs and sand-banks.

25. *ÆDESMIA NIGRA*.—Gillett, no. 25.

Observed by Mr. Gillett in Schirochika Bay; often seen by us in Kostin Shar and on Waigats: no specimens, however, were collected.

26. *ANAS PENELOPE*.

A female of this species was killed in September on a fresh-water lake on Waigats.

27. *MERGUS SERRATOR*.

Mixed with flocks of *Harelda glacialis* and *Ædesmia nigra* on Waigats. A male shot in the beginning of September was changing the small plumage.

28. *COLYMBUS SEPTENTRIONALIS*.—Spörer, N. Semlä, p. 99.
Breeds in Matthew's Strait.†29. *COLYMBUS GLACIALIS*.—Gillett, no. 21.†30. *COLYMBUS ARCTICUS*.—Gillett, no. 22.

Neither of these two species were obtained by Mr. Gillett or ourselves; however, we saw them not unfrequently in pairs in the Straits of Yugorsky and Kara.

†31. *FRATERCULA ARCTICA*, var. *glacialis*.—Gillett, no. 20.
In the northern part of Novaja Semlia. Not seen by myself.32. *MERGULUS ALLE*.—Gillett, no. 19.

As noticed by Mr. Gillett, more abundant in the north than in the south. I only observed Little Auks on the drift ice in the Gulf of Kara.

33. *CEPPHUS MANDTI*.—Gillett, no. 17.
Very numerous on all cliffs.34. *URIA BRUENNICHII*.—Gillett, no. 28.
As the preceding.35. *STERNA MACRURA*.—Gillett, no. 9.
Along the coast in small flocks.

36. *LARUS EBURNEUS*.—Gillett, no. 10.

Somewhat rare in Matthew's Strait, and along the west coast.

37. *LARUS TRIDACTYLUS*.—Gillett, no. 11.

One of the commonest birds on the west coast; not in Matthew's Strait, nor on Waigats.

38. *LARUS GLAUCUS*.—Gillett, no. 12.

Pretty common southward as far as Yugorsky Strait.

39. *LARUS*, sp. ?

In Yugorsky Strait, and on Waigats. I several times saw large Gulls with a dark slate-grey mantle, undoubtedly *Larus fuscus*.

40. *LESTRIS POMATORHINA*.—Gillett, no. 13.

By far the commonest species in Novaja Semlia and on Waigats. It feeds principally on Lemmings (*Myodes*), and is not unfrequently in flocks, especially on the ice-fields.

41. *LESTRIS LONGICAUDATA*.—Gillett, no. 15.

Numerous on Novaja Semlia, generally in pairs.

42. *LESTRIS PARASITUS*.—Gillett, no. 14.

Far rarer than the preceding.

43. *PROCELLARIA GLACIALIS*.—Gillett, no. 16.

Not seen on the continent, although met with everywhere on the high-sea between Novaja Semlia and the Norwegian coast.

Here ends my list of the birds of the district we observed. Besides the species named, some others, of which we could not obtain specimens, were seen; thus, I believe, I saw on Waigats a *Linaria*, several Sandpipers, *Totanus fuscus*, *T. calidris*, and possibly *T. ochropus**, as well as *Squatarola*, and several Ducks and Geese.

Tromsö, on board the 'Germania,' 20th Sept. 1871.

* *Totanus ochropus* has not a high northern range. The species seen by our contributor is more likely to have been *T. glareola*.—ED.